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Ericksen Contributes to COPLAC Book Project

Summary: Work by Janet Schrunk Ericksen, associate professor of English, will appear in a forthcoming collection about teaching, scholarship, and service at public liberal arts institutions.

(December 19, 2013)-Faculty authors from 14 [Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges](#) (COPLAC) member campuses have been selected to contribute to a multi-campus book project titled Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good. One of these authors is Janet Schrunk Ericksen, associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

In personal essays, Ericksen and the other contributors discuss adaptations they have made to lead integrated scholarly lives in the context of public liberal arts colleges. Each was selected by the dean from his or her institution. Bart Finzel, vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean at Morris, chose Ericksen because of her educational and professional experience at Research I universities.

“I thought reading her well informed thoughts on how faculty life and work expectations differ from one type of institution to another would be valuable,” he says.

In “Dr. Monograph or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Liberal Arts,” Ericksen writes about “coming to terms with changed expectations and working in a world where the expectations of a success are largely dictated by a small number of research institutions.” After attending a large state university, beginning her career at a research institution, and moving to Morris, she now asserts that faculty members’ contributions to higher education cannot be measured solely by Research I standards.

“I didn’t come from a liberal arts college, I hadn’t planned on working at a liberal arts college, and I think of myself now as a real advocate of not just the liberal arts education, but of the public liberal arts education,” she says.

Ericksen cites the caliber of her students and increased control over the pace at which her research progresses as the benefits of a career at Morris. She also applauds the campus for its mission, which she believes distinguishes it among its peers and garners it a place in COPLAC’s forthcoming book.

“Morris needs to be in there, because it’s a COPLAC institution, and I think Morris is exemplary in that group,” she says. “I think a lot of people in COPLAC look at Morris as exemplary. Not all of the schools embrace so much the liberal arts college idea, and we do that very well.”

Roads Taken: The Professorial Life, Scholarship in Place, and the Public Good will be published in early 2014 by Truman State University Press. Additional information is available at tsup.truman.edu.

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